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The time of planting and harvesting in 1861 came and went and the snows of another winter fell on more than 50 families who comprised the Snake River settlements. Then as the summer of 1862 arrived there was sufficient community spirit between the two groups that the first meeting house in the area was constructed. It was built of logs with a dirt roof and floor and was erected in the upper settlement, or Mound City. It was completed in time for the July 24th celebration. As it was nearing completion, the Presiding Bishop of the valley, Joseph S. Murdock of Heber, appointed Sidney Harmon Epperson to be presiding elder of the upper settlement. The lower settlement of more than 20 families was designated as a teacher's district of the upper settlement.

Elder Epperson was sustained in a meeting on June 26, 1862. He chose as his counselors John Fausett and Samuel Thompson. His calling as presiding elder proved him to be a man of faith and courage. He felt the responsibility of leadership and strove for unity among his people.

Side by side he worked with them in grubbing willows and sage brush, breaking land and making irrigation ditches, constructing roads, digging dugways to the canyons for fire wood, blasting rock and bridging streams.

Pioneering for the early Snake Creek settlers was a full-time job, 24 hours every day. However, by 1866 the lives of the people were further complicated with Indian problems. Restless red-men resented the encroachment by white men on their favorite hunting and trapping grounds, and often threatened the security of the new settlers. So, early in 1866 plans were made to abandon the rambling settlements along Snake Creek.

The axiom that there is "strength in numbers" and the wisdom of compromise are probably the two most important factors underlying the establishment of Midway, the thriving community that grew out of the two Snake Creek settlements.

The Indian troubles of 1866 made the settlers and leaders aware that the sprawling Snake Creek settlements would be highly vulnerable to the type of attacks being used by the Indians.

So it was that the upper and lower settlements on Snake Creek were advised to come together as one community. Tradition has it, however, that a warm contest ensued as to which community should join which. Each saw the virtue of their own position and desired not to move. However, a compromise location was chosen half way between the two settlements, and the new site was called, appropriately enough, Midway.

The first step in laying out the new settlement was a survey of the area. With Sidney H. Epperson and John Huber carrying the tapes and Mark Smith and Attewell Wootton Sr., the pegs, the city of Mid-

Surveying Midway

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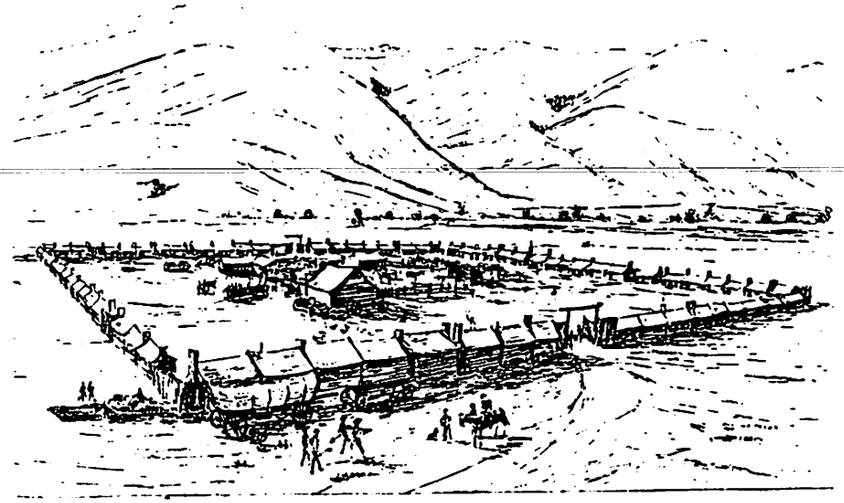
way was soon laid out with a public square in the center and ample city blocks surrounding the square.

Then began the work of "forting in." Around the central square some 75 primitive dirt-roofed log cabins sprang into existence, some abutting against each other, while between others were erected strong panels of upright posts. In this manner an impregnable wall was formed around the square. Small windows were provided at strategic points to serve as portholes in case of attack. Life in the new fort-string was conducted under military law, with officers and picket patrols acting at the call of the bugler, John Watkins.

Fort Midway brought to the people a sense of well provided security, and by bringing them close together helped develop a new happiness and community spirit. Fortunately, the fort was never attacked, though the settlers were ready to defend their lives and homes at any time. The fact that the fort was not molested speaks highly of the ability of the pioneers to cooperate in community projects.

The first 75 families in the old fort and their locations are as follows:

From the southwest to the northwest corner: Sidney H. Epperson, Jeremiah Robey, J. A. Robey, Simon Higgenbotham, George Snyder, Thomas Ritter, Edwin Bronson, Samuel Thompson, Ira Jacobs, Washington Clift, Moroni Blood, John Huber, John Wintsch, George Dabling,



An artist's sketch by Bill Whitaker depicting the establishment of Fort Midway in 1866.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Seek Ye First...

Religion was the mainstay in the lives of the early settlers along Provo Valley's Snake Creek. Nearly all of them left the security of homes and opportunities in the East and in foreign lands to cast their lots with the growing Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Through persecution and bitterness they had suffered in Missouri and Illinois, and now they were giving their lives to establish cities where they and their families could enjoy religious freedom.

Life was hard along Snake Creek, but never hard enough that the work couldn't be accomplished in six days of work a week. The Sabbath Day was reserved for worshipping, studying the Gospel and resting for the rigors of another week. Even before the first meeting house was built in the upper settlement in 1862 the people were meeting in each others' homes for worship services.

Just before the first meeting house was completed in July, 1862, Church authorities in the valley called Sidney H. Epperson to serve as Snake Creek's first presiding elder. He and his counselors, John Fausett and Samuel Thompson were sustained on June 26, 1862. These brethren also presided over the lower settlement until 1864 when David Van Wagonen was called as presiding elder there. His counselors were Andrew Hamilton and David Wood.

In 1866 because of Indian trouble the Saints of both settlements were advised to join ranks as one settlement in order to have the necessary strength for protection. A compromise location was chosen half way between the two settlements and the settlers, forted in, called the site Midway.

The first step in laying out the new settlement was the survey of the townsite. Sidney H. Epperson and John Huber carried the tape, Mark Smith and Attewell Wootton, Sr., the pegs, and within a few days Midway was laid out in ample blocks with the public square in the center.

Around the central square seventy-five primitive dirt-roofed log cabins sprang into existence, some abutting against each other while in some instances strong panels of upright posts made palisades between cabins built slightly apart, the whole forming an impregnable wall around the square. Small rear windows were to serve as portholes in case of attack. The fort was conducted under military law, having officers and picket patrols, arising and doing certain work at the call of the bugler, John Watkins.

These noble and Godfearing people now sensed the happiness of well provided security and felt they would be able to repel any attack of the Redman. Fortunately, the fort was never attacked; and when it was time to disband after a treaty had been made with the Indians and they had gone to live on reservations, most of the people decided to remain here. The upper and lower settlements were never rebuilt. The old fort was reserved by the town as a public square where meeting houses, schools, and stores were built.

Today a beautiful monument and marker erected by the Daughters of the Pioneers marks the scene and describes in a meager way the pioneering of this beautiful valley.

Under date of February 4, 1867, David F. Van Wagonen wrote from Midway that the winter had been comparatively mild with only 20 inches of snow and the thermometer only 4 degrees below zero at sunrise January 1, 1867. The health of the people was good and the past winter had not witnessed a single drunken person, nor heard of any riotous conduct in the whole valley, mainly because there were no distilleries or liquor shops.

The first grasshoppers were seen at Midway July 27, 1867.

December 29, 1867 Joseph S. Murdock was released as Presiding Bishop of Provo Valley and Abram Hatch was sustained in his place.

May 26, 1868 the first missionary from Midway, James Wooley Fisher, was set apart for a mission to Great Britain. He returned in 1869.

March 11, 1868 Sidney H. Epperson was reappointed by Bishop Abram Hatch as Presiding Elder of Midway with David F. Van Wagoner and Ira Norton Jacob as his counselors. The former counselors John Faucett and Samuel Thompson were released.

In 1868-69 a substantial rock building was erected at Midway on the southeast corner of the public square in which a good school was soon commenced. The house was built by taxation and was used for religious and other meeting purposes until 1874.

April 10, 1870 Sidney H. Epperson and counselors were released, and Henry Samuel Alexander was appointed Presiding Elder over the Midway Branch with David F. Van Wagonen and John Huber counselors.

In 1871 John Huber, the second missionary to be called from Midway, was called to the Swiss and German Mission, and Ira N. Jacob succeeded John Huber as second counselor to Henry S. Alexander. There were no further changes in the presiding officers until the organization of a ward in 1877.

In 1872 Elder George C. Lambert visited Midway, and he wrote the following interesting item which appeared in the Deseret News September 25, 1872:

"I arrived at this interesting little town last evening and contrary

to my expectations, found it to be a place abounding in interest and importance. Many residents of the territory are not aware of the existence of such a place; and although I am perhaps as well acquainted with the various towns and cities of the territory as any other person, having visited nearly every one, I had no conception until I came here of the location or magnitude of Midway. It is one of the most pleasantly situated towns I ever visited.

"Just now I see a man leading a pack horse loaded with boxes towards the mountains and am told that he is freighting butter and eggs for the citizens to the mines of Little Cottonwood, Big Cottonwood, and American Fork, distant from this place only nine miles over the mountains west.

"The small "Co-op" store here does a big business and the inhabitants of H. S. Alexander's ward are alive and very active. When the narrow gauge railroad now started between Echo and Coalville shall have extended on through this valley, the curiosities of this locality will be sought out by scientific men and curiosity seekers."

In 1873 the first tithing office was commenced. It was completed in 1874. Here Sunday School and other public meetings were held. Many wonderful entertainments were held here such as the Aaronic Priesthood Quorum which had an annual affair. They would meet in the tithing office and dance until about 11 P.M. Then they would go across the street to the school, which was on the southeast corner of the public square. There tables were set with the good things of this world.

1875 German Hall

Many Swiss people had arrived in the valley at this time. They organized a brass band under the direction of Andrew A. Burgener and built a music hall on the north of the public square where Dean Zenger's home now stands. They held their own L.D.S. meetings in this building conducted in the Swiss and German language by Gottlieb Kohler.

Among these later arrivals were Empey, Bunnel, Probst, Hasler, Murri, Haueter, Buhler, Barben, Remund, Kohler, Huffaker, Kummer, Schaer, Besendorfer, Gertsch, Sonderegger, Kennah, and others.

In 1877 Provo Valley became Wasatch Stake and Bishop Alexander was chosen as counselor to the Stake President, Abram Hatch, and at a special conference held July 15 of that year the Midway Ward was officially organized with David F. Van Wagoner as Bishop, John Watkins, 1st Counselor, and Alva J. Alexander, 2nd Counselor.

March 23, 1878 John Huber was appointed clerk of the Midway Ward. The Church membership now numbered 625. They had outgrown the tithing office and school and a new meeting house was necessary. April 4, 1881 at 10:00 o'clock A.M. the cornerstones of Midway assembly rooms were laid with great ceremonies.

1st Potrock Meeting House

The southeast corner was dedicated by Bishop David Van Wagoner. The southwest corner by First Counselor John Watkins, the northeast corner by Second Counselor Alvah J. Alexander, the ~~southwest~~ NE

A gathering at the old German Hall in Midway. Pictured are, first row, left to right, Fred Kuhni, Ernest Kuhni, Sterling Morton, William Boss, John Durtschi, Joseph Burgener, Alfred Durtschi, William Durtschi, Huldrich Durtschi, Johnnie Durtschi. Second row, Rose Kuhni, Otto Kuhni, Ida Kohler, Clara Buehler, Alma Durtschi, Alice Durtschi, Emma Durtschi. Third row, Maudie Utiger, Elizabeth Mooseman, Louise Kuhni, Barbara Bauer, Catherine L. Durtschi, Conrad Gertsch Sr., Ulrich Buehler, Johannes Krebs, John Bauer, Mrs. John Kummer. Fourth row, Ulrich Probst, Susan Probst, Emma Hasler, Mary Huber Probst, Mary B. Schoney, Elize Durtschi, Carolina Durtschi, Elize Durtschi Gertsch, Maryanne Zenger, Annie Abegglen, Margaret Stucki. Fifth row, John Burgener Jr., Fred Hasler, Eliza Buehler, Anna K. Probst, Elizabeth Kohler, Emma K. Probst, Mrs. Michael Abplanalp, Mrs. Albert Lockner, Mrs. Fred Haueter and baby, Eliza Ernsberger, Anna Seifert, Maggie Boss. Sixth row, Jacob Baumgartner, Henry Zenger, John Besendorfer, Gottlieb Kohler, Ulrich Kuhni, John U. Buehler, Michael Shilt, Fredrick Remund, Martin Seifert, John Kummer. Seventh row, Edward Durtschi Jr., Fred Buehler, Fredrick Durtschi Jr., Fredrick Durtschi Sr., John Boss, Jacob Probst, Edward Durtschi Sr., Ulrich Abegglen, Alfred Durtschi and Henry Zenger Sr.

by John Huber. The stones had been prepared by Johannes Sonderegger. They were all high priests. At this time there were no other ward organizations of the priesthood. The seventies were organized as a quorum shortly after the Elders were organized in a stake capacity.

During 1885-1886 the first ward organ was purchased at $125. The meeting house had been completed to such an extent that the first meeting was held May 23, 1886; however, it was not dedicated until 1895. There was still an indebtedness of $40, and $50 more was needed for a skylight over the door. The building measured 60 ft. by 30 ft. and 16 ft. to the ceiling. It was built of native rock with a belfry at the south end which contained a big church bell, its beautiful, clear tones ringing out to call the people to worship and tolling on sad occasions for funerals.